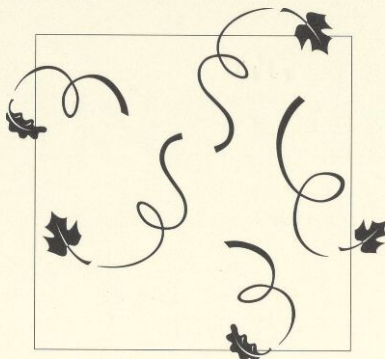


Fall 2003

THE MIND'S EYE

A Liberal Arts Journal
Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts



The Anti-Semite Was a Lady: The Paradox of Alma Mahler

By Roselle K. Chartock

Inaugural Address

By Hubie Jones

Four Minds: Case Studies in the Joy of Learning

By Maura C. Flannery

Poetry by

Katherine Hollander and Miriam O'Neal

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Excerpts from a review by Tony Gengareilly

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Two Drawings

By William Spezeski

Blankety-Blank: Or, Bad Language

By Robert H. Abel

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The Mind's Eye, a journal of scholarly and creative work, is published twice annually by Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts. While emphasizing articles of scholarly merit, *The Mind's Eye* focuses on a general communication of ideas of interest to a liberal arts college. We welcome expository essays, including reviews, as well as fiction, poetry and art. Please refer to the inside back cover for a list of writer's guidelines.

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Editor's File

This issue of *The Mind's Eye* features a number of new contributors, while it celebrates, as well, another winning essay from the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts Faculty Lecture Series. Roselle Chartock, professor of education at MCLA and winner of the 2003 Faculty Lecture Series Award, takes the reader through a fascinating account of the paradoxical life of Alma Mahler in "The Anti-Semite Was a Lady." Hubie Jones, senior fellow emeritus at the McCormack Institute, Boston, celebrates the investiture of MCLA president Mary Grant with an Inaugural Address that admonishes us to create a learning academy with a soul, one that provides a culture of caring and meets the needs of all its contributing members. In her article "Four Minds: Case Studies in the Joy of Learning," Maura Flannery, professor of biology at St. John's University, where she is director of the Center for Teaching and Learning, recognizes the careers of four education role models, whose intellectual curiosity and passion for learning took them into exciting fields of inquiry. Dennis Russell, associate professor at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University, discovers his own passion in the late plays of Harold Pinter where helpless characters thrash about in the maw of contemporary politics. We also welcome the poetic contributions of Marlboro College graduate Katherine Hollander and UMass Dartmouth professor Miriam O'Neal, and appreciate as well the fine artwork of William Spezeski, computer science professor at MCLA. Boston artist Joan Ryan's recent exhibition at MCLA is highlighted by a selection from Tony Gengarely's review of the show. To round out the issue, Robert Abel entertains us with a piece on the creative and humorous aspects of swearing.

I am privileged once more to have had the opportunity to manage this edition, while our new Managing Editor, Bill Montgomery, is on sabbatical. Before I exit "stage right," I would like to thank a number of people who have been my inspiration and support over the past

six years. First, I extend my appreciation to the members of the Editorial Board, who have worked diligently and selflessly to assure that *The Mind's Eye* is a journal of quality and intellectual integrity. I am proud now to rejoin the Editorial Board and look forward to working with them and with Bill to build an even more successful journal in the future. Second, I am grateful to the Advisory Board, to those who have lent their names and time in support of our endeavors. I would also like to thank especially Arlene Bouras, our indefatigable Copy Editor, who has contributed to our enterprise her considerable expertise. I extend a similar thank you to the journal's secretary, Karen DeOrdio, who takes care of special arrangements for the Editorial Board and supervises the Authors' Reception and the journal's distribution. And a final note of gratitude for Leon Peters, the *Mind's Eye* layout designer, whose extraordinary abilities add an extra degree of professionalism to our efforts.

Tony Gengarelly
Managing Editor

The Anti-Semite Was a Lady: The Paradox of Alma Mahler

BY ROSELLE K. CHARTOCK

Alma Mahler Gropius Werfel (1879–1964), a woman whose life spanned the greater part of the 20th century in both fin-de-siècle Vienna and the United States, was at different times married to two Jewish men and involved with dozens of others, many of them well known for their creative genius. This fact does not on the surface appear to be unusual but becomes paradoxical when her lifelong anti-Semitic attitudes come to light.

This article explores how Mahler's anti-Jewish beliefs and attitudes developed and how she was able to reconcile her prejudices with her adoration of men who often became the targets of those prejudices. Accessing material related to her life and attitudes can also be helpful in understanding the origins of anti-Semitism in general, which afflicts and has afflicted people from other times and places who, while counting individual Jews among their closest friends and allies—as did Alma—were, nevertheless, rabid anti-Semites.

In fact, one such person was a young Adolph Hitler, who, between the years 1906 and 1913, lived in Vienna and ironically supported Alma's famous husband, conductor and director of the Vienna Opera, Gustav Mahler, at a time when pan-Germanists were trying to oust him from his post because he was a Jew, albeit one who had converted to Christianity. While Hitler was acquiring knowledge about the powerful political uses of anti-Semitic rhetoric from Viennese politicians that eventually led to his murderous version of anti-Semitism, it is Alma's more common brand that reveals how such attitudes, when embedded in the very fabric of a society, whether in Vienna or elsewhere, can lead to the unleashing of destructive forces. These lessons remain important today no matter who the targets of intolerance.

With its connections to 20th-century European history, to the psychology of anti-Semitism and to the world of music and the arts, this research about the paradox of Alma Mahler's life is a model for future teachers of the kind of interdisciplinary curriculum they themselves might develop and integrate into their teaching.

Biographical Sketch

In order to understand the thesis of this article, a biographical sketch of Alma's life can be useful in providing the context and time frame within which her paradoxical relationships took place. (I'll refer to her as Alma so as to distinguish her from Gustav Mahler, her first husband.)

The woman who became "the most beautiful girl in Vienna" and who achieved fame because of her involvement with so many geniuses, was born Alma Schindler in 1879, the daughter of Vienna landscape painter Emil Jakob Schindler (1842–1892) and his wife Anna Sofie Bergen (1857–1938), an actress. Anna's affair in 1881 produced for two-year-old Alma a half sister, Grete.

Alma, surrounded by privilege and comfort, studied art, piano and composing as a young woman in the midst of fin-de-siècle Vienna, a time of social and political turmoil but also a time of great intellectual and creative activity. Innovators in music, art, literature, philosophy, economics and architecture, as well as psychoanalysis, broke their ties to the traditional perspectives of 19th-century liberal culture in which they had been reared (Schorske xviii). Gustav Klimt (1862–1918), 17

years Alma's senior and one of the most brilliant *Jugendstil* (new style) painters of the Secessionist movement, which he cofounded, used to be in and out of her parents' house and stole from her her very first kiss, while Jewish composer Alexander von Zemlinsky (1871–1942), her composing tutor, became her first lover in 1897. (Through him she met other composition students, including Arnold Schoenberg, who eventually radically redefined musical composition and with whom she remained friends for half a century.)

When Alma was only 13, her father died. With his death in 1892, according to biographer Susanne Keegan, Alma, distraught at this loss, was determined to find a heroic model to replace him (Keegan 8).

Alma's mother married Schindler's student and long-term assistant, Carl Moll, and in 1899, Alma acquired another half sister and the family moved into a huge villa, Hohe Warte, designed by one of the most innovative architects of the time, Josef Hoffmann (1870–1956).

In 1901, Alma met and fell in love with Gustav Mahler (1860–1911) and caused a sensation when, in 1902—22 and pregnant—she married the distinguished Jewish composer and conductor, 20 years her senior. At the time, he was director of the Vienna Opera, the most powerful position in the Vienna music scene and one he had assumed in 1897 only after converting to Catholicism. Alma had to give up her own artistic aspirations as a composer when she married Mahler. There was room for only one composer; her role, as far as Mahler was concerned, was to be that of loving companion. (Mahler's baptism did not spare him from anti-Semitic German nationalists, who, eight years later, acted to remove him from his position; and he was subjected to sporadic eruptions of anti-Semitic prejudice that possibly sprang from "a peculiarly Viennese mixture of parochial jealousy, monetary envy and dislike of the unfamiliar" [Keegan 73]).

Alma bore Mahler two children, Maria Anna, or Putzi (1902–1907), who, at the age of five, died of scarlet fever and diphtheria, and Anna Justina, or Gucki (1904–1988), who became a famous sculptress and whose fifth husband, Albrecht Joseph, a writer and secretary to Franz Werfel, was a significant source for Alma's biographers on the subject of her anti-Semitism. Mahler became aware of his acute heart condition not long after Putzi's death. Added to these two afflictions

was the anti-Semitism that led to his conducting at the Vienna Opera for the last time in 1907 and the beginning of his engagement at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, where he and Alma would live for three or four months at a time. In autumn 1909, Mahler became the chief conductor of the Philharmonic Society of New York.

In 1910, after eight years of a challenging marriage, Alma sought treatment at the thermal health spa of Tobelbard, and there met a handsome young architect, Walter Gropius (1883–1969), who, as part of the Bauhaus movement, later had a major impact on modern architecture. Their affair prompted an encounter between a devastated and impotent Mahler and psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, who supposedly said to Mahler, “Your age, of which you are so much afraid, is precisely what attracts your young wife.” And, indeed, later in her life Alma confirmed that “I . . . was always searching for the short, stocky, wise, superior man I had known and loved in my father” (Mahler-Werfel, *Bridge* 54). Mahler’s four-hour meeting with Freud at the Dutch spa of Leyden supposedly was successful: Mahler recovered his potency, and the marriage was a happy one until his death a year later on May 18, 1911.

Alma retreated after Mahler’s death and did not appear in public again until six months later to see Bruno Walter, Mahler’s protégé, conduct the premiere of Mahler’s *Das Lied von der Erde* (*The Song of the Earth*) in Munich. During that year she had met biologist Paul Kammerer, who, though married, fell in love with her. And her friend Joseph Fraenkel, the well-known neurologist, proposed marriage. At the same time, her relationship with Gropius cooled, albeit temporarily.

In 1912, just a year after Mahler’s death, 33-year-old Alma became involved with painter Oskar Kokoschka (1886–1980), seven years younger than she and “enfant terrible” of the Vienna art scene. The passionate affair lasted three years, until 1915. Though she loved him, Kokoschka’s behavior frightened her. For example, he was so intensely jealous that he forbade her to expose her neck or wrists in public or cross her legs (Weidinger 7) and was infuriated when, without telling him, she aborted their child. Apart from the countless paintings and drawings that testify to their anguished relationship, there was a life-size doll, a faithful reproduction of Alma down to the most intimate

details, which Kokoschka had made to console himself for the loss of his lover. The painting that best represented their affair was *The Bride of the Wind*, or *The Tempest*, which showed the two naked and whirling in space. (A biography of Alma came out in 1991 with the same title and then, in 2001, a movie based on the biography.)

Alma's next marriage, four years after Mahler's death, was to Walter Gropius, and in 1916 she gave birth to a daughter, Manon, who died at 19 of poliomyelitis. (Alma and Gropius had separated long before that, in 1918, when Manon was only two (Keegan 260). He left Germany in 1934 and was professor of architecture at Harvard from 1937 to 1952. They actively corresponded and remained friends once they were both in America.)

In 1918, while still married to Gropius, Alma became pregnant by Czech-born, Austrian-Jewish writer-poet Franz Werfel, younger than Alma by nine years, who later went on to write *The Song of Bernadette* and *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*. The baby, named Martin, lived only 10 months. Said Alma about the infant, "The worst thing . . . was the uncertainty of whether it was definitely [Franz's] child. . . . I was not absolutely sure" (*Diaries* January 9, 1919; Monson 204). It wasn't until 1929, 11 years later, that Werfel and Alma, then 50, officially married. It was her third marriage. (In the 1930s, while married to Werfel, she had an affair with a priest, Professor Johannes Hollnsteiner, whom she befriended upon returning to her Catholic faith. Werfel knew about it but chose to ignore it.)

When Austria fell to the German army, and Werfel's works were burned by the Nazis, he and Alma were forced to flee Vienna. In 1940, the Werfels, along with Heinrich Mann, his nephew, Golo Mann, and other artists and writers fled by foot over the rugged Pyrenees to Spain, ultimately leaving Europe for safety in the United States. They had been assisted by Varian Fry, dubbed "the American [Oskar] Schindler," a 32-year-old Harvard-educated classicist who was the representative of the American Emergency Rescue Committee in Marseilles (Keegan 278), who helped save the lives of dozens of other musicians, writers and artists, including Marc Chagall and Max Ernst.

The couple settled in Hollywood in 1940, part of a close community of other émigrés. While in California, Werfel completed his novel

The Song of Bernadette, fulfilling the vow he had made in 1940 in Lourdes that if he survived and made a safe escape, he would write a tribute to the child whose faith had prompted the miracle that many Catholics believe occurred in the French town (Monson 277).

Like Mahler, Werfel had a weak heart, and after several heart attacks, died in Los Angeles in 1945. After traveling to Europe, Alma decided, in 1952, to move to New York, where she published her autobiography and enjoyed showing off all of the trophies she had collected throughout her life: paintings by Oskar Kokoschka, scores of Gustav Mahler, manuscripts of Franz Werfel and love letters of Walter Gropius. Alma died on December 11, 1964, in Manhattan at the age of 85 and was buried in the Grinzinger Cemetery in Vienna, with her daughter Manon Gropius, her husband Gustav Mahler and their daughter, Maria.

Tom Lehrer, the satirical songwriter and then a Harvard mathematics teacher, said, after reading Alma's obituary, that it was "the juiciest, spiciest, raciest obituary that has ever been my pleasure to read. . . . It seemed to me . . . that the story of Alma was the stuff of which ballads should be made." So Lehrer immortalized her in a song, which concludes with these words:

And that is the story of Alma, who knew how to receive and to give, The body that reached her embalmer was one that had known how to live. Alma, tell us, how can they [women] help being jealous, Ducks always envy the swans who get Gustav and Walter, You never did falter, with Gustav and Walter and Franz. (Lehrer)

The Lady Was an Anti-Semite

As this brief review of her life reveals, Alma Mahler was not only married to two Jewish men, Mahler and Werfel, but also had among her many friends and admirers dozens of Jewish men, including von Zemlinsky, Fraenkel, Kammerer, Schoenberg, as well as the writer Arthur Schnitzler, composer Erich Wolff, writer Stefan Zweig and later Erich Korngold and two Mahler protégés, Bruno Walter and Otto Klemperer.

The paradox lies in the fact that Alma was not really fond of Jews

in general. She herself documented those prejudices early on in her *Diaries, 1898–1902*, in which she wrote: “Without me, they [Jews] would *never* have become human beings—and so it has gone with all of them! They need help and direction—*brains and feelings from us*” (Mahler-Werfel, *Diaries*; Monson 165–166); and when her attentions to her composing tutor, von Zemlinsky, were initially spurned, wrote: “You Jewish sneak, keep your hooked-nose Jew-girl. She’s just right for you” (Mahler-Werfel, *Diaries* 381); and then, when further frustrated by him in 1901, wrote: “And yet he’s thinking of giving up my lesson-time to one of his friends. If so, I shall abandon my studies. Let myself go—*get married!* But not . . . [to] some Semitic moneybag” (429); and in 1900, on hearing music by Carl Goldmark (1830–1915): “His music is too Jewish for my taste” (281); and despite even young Hitler’s praise of Mahler’s interpretation of Wagner, Alma insisted, “No Jew can understand Wagner.” Later on her son-in-law, Albrecht Joseph, reported that she made the following remarks in her Hollywood home in the 1940s: “The Allies . . . were weaklings and degenerates, the Germans, including Hitler, supermen”; and “the humanistic liberal cause is lost . . . [and] the blond beast will triumph”; and “the Nazis, after all, have done a great many praiseworthy things”; and “one should not believe all one hears about concentration camps” (Keegan 288). Perhaps even more bizarre was Alma’s view of her own daughter, Anna Mahler, as racially tainted.

What accounts for Alma’s lifelong distaste for Jews and “Jewishness” when, at the same time, she surrounded herself with them? The explanation for her anti-Semitism is perhaps quite obvious when one considers Vienna at the turn of the century and the anti-Semitism that prevailed then (and some would say now). Fin-de-siècle Vienna was not only a time of innovative artistic expression and beauty but also a time of rising nationalism among the kingdoms that the Hapsburg family had ruled for centuries. In addition, while the Austro-Hungarian Empire was slowly disintegrating, the most popular politicians in Vienna were attracting the masses with their anti-Semitic rhetoric. The times were bitter, and the times were sweet, and it was in this environment that Alma’s character was formed.

Vienna and Anti-Semitism

The first documentation of a Jewish presence in Vienna dates around A.D. 906, and throughout the later centuries their status went back and forth from tolerance to repression to banishment to tolerance to full citizenship rights under the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1867. As a result of these civil rights and improving economic chances, Jews moved to Vienna in large waves. Vienna's Jewish population grew from 2.2 percent of the city's population to 8 percent, 147,000, by the turn of the century (Funke 40). "Feeling beleaguered by this ever-growing Jewish presence, Austrian gentiles . . . made anxious jokes, pleaded for the assimilation of the 'alien' invaders, or . . . issued strident calls for their expulsion." With the emancipation of Jews all across Europe came a new kind of anti-Semitism. Once referred to as arrogant, God's chosen people and Christ killer, the Jew now became the "unscrupulous speculator and corrosive cosmopolitan." In his biography of Freud, Peter Gay notes that "Naturally enough, children echoed their parents, and anti-Jewish talk overflowed from public demagoguery and family prejudices into the daily banter of schoolmates" (Gay 20).

Emperor Franz Joseph—dubbed *Judenkaiser* because of his support for religious tolerance—was himself at a loss at the continuing flood of anti-Semitism. His daughter, Marie Valerie, recorded in her diary: "We talked about hatred and Pa said, 'Yes, yes, of course we do everything we can to protect the Jews, but who really is not an anti-Semite'" (Hamann 331)?

Nevertheless, at the same time, Jewish prominence rose in the life of Viennese culture. Jews became publishers, editors, journalists, gallery owners, theatrical and musical promoters, poets, novelists, conductors, musicians, painters, scientists, philosophers and historians. "'Since the Austrian aristocracy had no truck with such pursuits, they were left to a few nonconformists—and to Jews'" (Jakob Wassermann, qtd. in Gay 21). Jews also made careers in the bureaucracy of the Hapsburg monarchy and in its army largely after converting to Catholicism, though some achieved high ranks without baptism.

While hatred of Jews was a constant during the golden years of fin-de-siècle Vienna, it did not become threatening until the appear-

ance of racial anti-Semitism, whose believers would accept nothing less than removal of all Jews as opposed to acceptance with conversion. Among the racial anti-Semites was a successful politician, Georg von Schönerer, who adapted German ideas on ethnicity to create a party advocating anti-Semitism and pan-Germanism. His followers were vocal and violent. On one occasion, for example, during the celebration of the emperor's birthday in 1888, pan-Germanists surrounded the emperor's coach, shouting, "Down with Habsburg. . . . Down with Austria! Down with the Jews! Long live Germany" (Morton 62)!

Von Schönerer set the stage for another opportunist, Karl Lueger, the "political chemist" whose election as mayor was based on his ability to fuse the elements of Catholic and lower-middle-class social disaffection into the Jew-baiting Christian Social Party (Schorske 143). (Lueger, to this day, continues to be an honored mayor of Vienna.)

Pro-Lueger newspapers railed against the Jewish presence and caricatured and stereotyped Jews in cartoons, articles and editorials, while in the more extremist pan-German press in 1908 a cartoon even attacked Lueger because he accepted Jews who had converted. Schönerer, on the other hand, had drilled into his followers: "Concerning the Jews, a Jew remains a Jew whether he is baptized or not." Seeing Judaism as a racial rather than religious issue also came to distinguish Hitler's ideology (Rothschild 18). A young Adolph Hitler had come from Upper Austria to Vienna in 1906 and would ultimately seize and embellish Schönerer's and Lueger's ideas, even though, while in Vienna, he had had many Jewish friends; and most of the people who purchased his paintings were Jews (Hamann 349, 356).

It was also upon the undercurrents of anti-Semitism that playwright and journalist Theodor Herzl realized that his dream of Jewish dignity through assimilation was not to be (Schorske 183). He would lead the Zionist movement, a new exodus, and bring persecuted Jews, especially those eastern European Jews who were being prevented from sharing in the Enlightenment, to the Promised Land. But he would do so with an ironic twist. Wrote historian Schorske, "The materials out of which [Herzl] framed [his mission] were those of the non-Jewish liberal culture which . . . he had adopted as his own" (147). Herzl wanted to change Zionism's image from "messy ghetto zealotry" to

one of respectability. In line with that purpose he declared that the delegates to the First Zionist Congress in 1897 were to wear formal attire, top hats and tailcoats, for the benefit of the reporters and cameras. According to Frederic Morton, Herzl led his people toward Jerusalem with a nearly "Christian lordliness taught him by his very self-disdain as a Jew in Schönerer's and Lueger's Vienna" (307). Such self-disdain characterized many of Vienna's Jews and so, too, other victims of prejudice, who, in order to survive and prosper, often took on the attitudes of their oppressors. When Mahler, for example, referred to Alma's ringlets as "the Jewish hair-do" and asked her to change it, was he any different from those African-Americans of the 1950s and '60s who believed that straightening their hair might make them more like the majority and thus more acceptable? The self-disdain that developed among Jews in turn-of-the-century Vienna may also help explain why Mahler and Werfel chose to love Alma despite her anti-Semitism.

The Paradox

The anti-Semitism that saturated the environment of fin-de-siècle Vienna was contagious and clearly Alma fell victim to the poison. But the question still remains as to why such attitudes and beliefs did not then prevent her from marrying two Jewish men and counting Jews among her closest friends and lovers. There are two possible explanations for her attraction to Jews, Mahler and Werfel in particular.

Joshua Sobol, a prolific Israeli playwright and director, portrayed the motives behind Alma's attraction to creative Jewish men despite her anti-Semitism in a polydrama, *Alma*, that he produced in 1996, a polydrama being a new form of theatrical experience in which scenes are performed simultaneously on several floors and in many rooms of a building, while viewers choose where to travel on their "theatrical journey. . . . I am speculating here," writes Sobol, "but I think that she felt that the Jewish spirit at that moment in history was probably very much alive and . . . that Jewish young artists or writers were given the freedom to join the European society in the German cultural circle. And the urge to join . . . in that culture made them extremely creative" and thus attractive to Alma (Sobol).

Sobol suspects that Alma picked her male partners according to their talent and their potential for expressing the spirit of an age. He labels Alma "one of the monsters of our time" because of her oversized ambition"; and in his production he puts emphasis on "her pushing and manipulating Werfel to become greater than Thomas Mann. . . . Mahler she did not have to push, because he was pushing himself hard enough." (Because of the size of Mahler's ambition, Sobol calls him a monster as well.) "But," he continues, "I think that's what she liked about him . . . that he had this enormous engine pushing him to achieve." She wanted to be there when these people were taking off,

going into the sky like shooting stars, all that makes of her an expression of the spirit of our century, where ambition has no limits . . . it is that kind of almost human megalomania. And I think that Alma was a megalomaniac. (Sobol)

An explanation for Alma's attraction to Mahler and Werfel may also have had to do with the fact that they were not, as Alma might have put it, "too Jewish." Both men grew up on the borderland between Judaism and Christianity. Alma wrote about Mahler's strong leaning to Catholic mysticism, "whereas Jewish ritual had never meant anything to him." But at the same time she notes that Mahler never denied his Jewish origin. "Rather, he emphasized it. He was a believer in Christianity, a Christian-Jew, and he paid the penalty" [enforced retirement as director of the Vienna Opera] (Mahler-Werfel, *Mahler* 90). Interestingly, Leonard Bernstein, himself a world-famous conductor and composer, applauded what he saw as this Jewish-Christian dichotomy in Mahler's music and referred to Mahler as "double-man" and his music as "East-West," the eastern influence reflecting his Jewish roots and the western, the Christian influence (Bernstein 208–226, 255–264).

In her autobiography, Alma commented about her Christian-paganism and how skeptical she was of religion while Mahler, she said, "truly believed in Christ" and "fiercely combated" her agnosticism, the result being the "curious paradox of a Jew championing Christ against a Christian" (Mahler-Werfel, *Bridge* 27–28). Nevertheless, Mahler's baptism was never considered a religious move but, rather, a utilitarian one intended to qualify him as director of the Vienna Opera.

Werfel, on the other hand, decided against conversion but played with the idea of bringing together modern Christianity and Judaism through his writings, in which he hoped in some way to magnify "the divisive mystery of man in a way . . . not confined to followers of any one Church" (Keegan 286). Werfel spoke at length about his beliefs after the publication of his book *The Song of Bernadette*. Asked by the Archbishop of New Orleans how a Jew could have penetrated so deeply into the heart of the Catholic faith and not been affected by the central tenet of its creed, the belief in miracles, he replied by saying that he had always felt close to the mysteries of Christianity and held the faith of its believers in the greatest respect; but he could not take the decisive step toward conversion because, among other reasons, he thought that in such times it might look as if he were seeking some personal advantage by denying that he belonged to "an unfortunate cruelly persecuted minority." He went on to say that "the Catholic Church, through its long history, but also in the present time, had played an active role in this persecution of the Jews, and had never seriously regretted and denounced such activities" (Werfel, qtd. in Keegan 286). Werfel would likely have been horrified if he had known that Alma posthumously tried to have him baptized, he, among all of her Jewish men, who had been the most outspoken about his Judaism.

When she was caught in her stereotypical thinking by a more rational being, Alma, like many bigots, always had a way of justifying her prejudice. For example, Albrecht Joseph, Alma's son-in-law and secretary to Werfel when they were living in California, described one afternoon when—while Franz was resting—Alma invited him to join her for a drink. Joseph declined—he did not drink in the afternoon. Said Alma, "Oh, yes, of course, you are a Jew." That led him to list the Jews who *did* drink in the afternoons, evenings, even the mornings. "At this friendly protestation, Alma laughed. 'She felt that *her* remarks about Jews were different from others.' She was speaking, after all, about a large group, not about individuals" (Monson 293). Gordon Allport, the late Harvard psychologist known for his penetrating study of the origins and nature of prejudice, explains this device, which says: "I have no quarrel with Jews as an individual but only with what his race represents in the mass." The device represents, according to Allport, "an extreme instance of confusion—the 'group fallacy' at its

worst. . . . It admits that one cannot dislike the individual, but maintains . . . that one can and should somehow dislike the group. This is the essence of overcategorization" (Allport 319).

Alma's version of anti-Semitism may also be an example of what Allport calls bifurcation; that is, one can still believe that there is an evil Jewish "essence," even if this essence permeates only part of the group (Allport 319). She could rationalize or justify her prejudice by making a few exceptions but holding the remaining portion of the category intact.

Some insights into Alma's lifelong anti-Semitism—even while married to two Jewish men—can also be found in Allport's psychological theories. Rancor can mask fear and frustration, and Alma suffered from both. Her fear of a loss of affection may have begun when Alma, at the tender age of two, acquired a stepsister, and then may have increased when she was 13 with the loss of the artistic father she adored. With his death, Alma's fear may have become so embedded that whatever man came into her life—to replace her father—she would continue to harbor the fear that he, too, might leave her. Fear of such loss, according to Allport, is often expressed in the form of aggression (331), and in Alma's case may have taken the form of the anti-Semitic attitudes and remarks that she displaced onto an innocent group that included among its members people she loved.

Further, one of Alma's frustrations developed as a result of the marriage to Mahler, who had forbidden her to continue her musical career. Alma's artistic goals were stifled; she feared that her compositions would never be performed and that she would never again have the chance to create. It should also be noted that as Alma sought recognition for her own talents, the sexist attitudes of her time likely added to those frustrations. Again Allport explains the role that fear and frustration play in the development of prejudice. He notes that one's fear may be caused by a mounting residue of inner feelings of weakness in dealing with the hazards of the outer world:

Time and again the sufferer may have failed to win in his encounter with life. . . . He is afraid of his own ineffectiveness and grows suspicious of other people whose greater competence he regards as a threat. (346)

Alma's own words confirm this theory of her situation and behavior:

During the early years of our married life I felt very uncertain of myself in my relations with my husband. . . . He looked down on me [and] sometimes he played the part of a schoolmaster, relentlessly strict and unjust. (Mahler-Werfel, *Mahler* 40)

And later Alma admits that

I suffered more and more from a torturing sense of inferiority. Often I had to affect a cheerful air with tears ready to burst from my eyes. I could have found in my music a complete cure for this state of things, but he had forbidden it . . . and now I dragged my hundred songs with me wherever I went—like a coffin into which I dared not even look. (Mahler-Werfel, *Mahler* 70)

Some (though not all) people, notes Allport, respond to their fears and frustrations with aggression—verbal and otherwise (330). And Alma's anti-Semitic outpourings were perhaps the major way in which she manifested hers.

Once they were settled in America, writer Thomas Mann, when asked by some of his left-wing friends how he could remain a friend of Alma's, was reported to have puzzled seriously for a few moments and thought the problem over, then to have smiled and said, "She gives me partridges to eat, and I like them" (Joseph, qtd. in Keegan 289). His answer was as good as any, for Alma's continuing anti-Semitism was an absurdity that could only be explained on her own terms. The irony was that Alma would have been outraged if anyone else had voiced the kind of extreme pro-Nazi sentiments that she had voiced in front of Schoenberg and Werfel. Only she, in her privileged position as a creature who had moved between two worlds, been married to Mahler and Werfel, had Jewish friends all her life and still claimed anti-Semites among her intimates, could be allowed to express what she felt regardless of the sensibilities of those around her. Only she could decide who was Jewish (Keegan 289); and she felt that she was "entitled to her prejudices" (313).

Although never a Nazi, Alma was always on the side of a pure-bred German against a Jew, but she singled out Jews, like von Zemlinsky, Schoenberg, Mahler, Werfel and others who fell into her

highest category of human being—the creative artist—and allowed them to become “honorary Gentiles,” thus setting them apart from the less fortunate members of their race and making them worthy of her friendship (Keegan 76, 289). Perhaps the Jewish men who received this special affection felt honored to have been singled out by Alma and loved by her. The extent of their psychological denial, self-disdain or swallowed pride is unclear. Perhaps they would have agreed with her son-in-law, who, despite knowing her doubts about his becoming her son-in-law (he was a Jew), appreciated Alma’s more endearing qualities, her vitality, her strong though quirky mind, her gentle femininity, her generosity with food and drink, her gifts as a pianist and the “infectious, tornado-like force of her spiritual excitation” when whirled onto a higher plane by an exceptional musical performance” (Joseph, qtd. in Keegan 305).

Conclusion

The paradox of Alma Mahler was that she was an anti-Semite and also a lady who loved—and could not imagine living without—Jews. On the one hand she was endowed with wit, charm, beauty and musical talent; on the other, she was fiercely ambitious and anti-Semitic, a prejudice that likely resulted from her environment and the fears and frustrations she developed during her life. The paradox can perhaps best be explained by the comment she once made to Mahler, that all she loved in a man was his achievement. Indeed, all of her husbands had achieved fame in their respective fields; communion with such accomplished men appears to have been Alma’s ultimate aphrodisiac (Keegan 312), and, in addition, as muse to genius, she was also rewarded with considerable wealth and status. It appears that Alma Mahler “forgave” her husbands and lovers their Jewishness because of their genius, and, in turn, they seem to have forgiven her for her anti-Semitism because of her beauty, talent and sensuality and the way in which she stood by and cared for them. Perhaps both parties got what they wanted out of the relationship. Some Jews, however, might find that trade-off abhorrent, but the final judgment is up to the reader.

Whatever the verdict, the fact that Alma Mahler-Gropius-Werfel was not able to rise above a poisoned environment or to perceive the

political demagoguery of her time for what it was, could lead one to conclude that this paradoxical lady, while, indeed, legendary, was no heroine.

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Inaugural Address

BY HUBIE JONES

It is my great honor to participate in the inauguration of Dr. Mary K. Grant as your new President. I am thrilled that the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts and Mary Grant have found each other again. This union should flourish in the years ahead. Your challenge together is to build an academy that has a soul. Too many institutions in our society are soulless, meaning that they lack clarity about their core values and, therefore, they gyrate about devoid of compelling purpose and are pushed around by prevailing winds. The academy is the last place for such a state of aimlessness. You now have a new leader with the vision and ability to help your institution claim and enhance its soul. So this morning, I want to talk briefly about the soul in the academy.

Since I am not a theologian, I went to *Webster's Dictionary* for a definition of soul. Here it is: "Soul is the immaterial essence, animating principle, or actualizing cause of an individual life." I would also like to add "of an institution's life." An academy has a soul if most of the following conditions exist:

First of all, at the core of the institution is a set of unshakable values defining the ethical standards and noble ideals for which the institution stands. These values pulsate throughout the academy. They are palpable.

Second, a spirit of fairness pervades the institution, actualized by the following:

- Fair allocation of resources throughout the institution
- Fair exercise of institutional discipline
- Fair enrollment and employment practices
- Fair adjudication of transgressions. People mistakes are used as an opportunity for learning, not merely for punishment.

Third, an authentic community exists, where healthy human connections are strong, facilitated and nourished by social structures, policies, mechanisms and programs. Consequently, the following conditions are present:

- There is a culture of caring exemplified by swift responses to and support for members of the academic community who are in pain and in need.
- Everyone in the academy is a beneficiary of its resources, but students are the chief beneficiaries. Particularly, there is an institutional commitment to the human growth and development of all members of the academic community.
- Everyone owns the mission, goals and agenda of the institution due to bona fide collaborative planning and decision-making.
- The community celebrates its successes, traditions and diversity.
- There are continual efforts to level social stratification and to have social integration of the races, ethnic groups and social classes.

Fourth, the leaders in the academy have earned moral authority by virtue of exercising their power and authority through principled behavior or practices.

Finally, there are inspirational leaders at every level in the academy, not just at the top.

This morning, I urge you to aspire and work to have these conditions and operational values live at your institution of higher learning so it can have a soul.

You are an academy that is committed to the liberal arts; that is what your name connotes. I urge you to deepen your commitment to delivering a liberal arts education. Too many institutions of higher education are driven by the job market. Their priority becomes giving their students skills and knowledge demanded by workplaces. A liberal arts education is then reduced to irrelevancy. I am not naïve: I

understand the importance of having a satisfying livelihood and the ability to support oneself and one's family at an adequate level. However, liberal arts education is education for life in all of its richness and its meanings. It shapes human beings who are critical thinkers and who understand the values of rigorous inquiry. It assures that students are effective in written and oral communication. It provides students with knowledge of history—history of the world, our nation and our communities.

Most information coming to us in an ahistorical context is useless. Liberal arts provide an appreciation of the arts and culture, because "your culture will save you." It provides knowledge of the world's religions, desperately needed to understand today's global movement and politics. Liberal arts assist students in gaining competence in many languages in order to effectively function in this increasingly multilingual, multicultural world. A liberal arts education provides knowledge of economics and of how the conditions of the economy either restrict or expand policies and program choices.

Your mission is to help students know that learning is an aggressive act, not a passive one, requiring them to take responsibility for their own learning. Liberal arts education helps a student know what is worth preserving in a culture or society at all costs.

Hopefully, students come to also know that they have responsibility to be engaged citizens, committed to a life of service to community and others. As Marian Wright Edelman, president of the Children's Defense Fund, has said, "Service is the rent we pay for living." A college education, through service learning, can help students embrace this truth and go out and change the world for the better.

In short, we are helping young people establish a life rhythm. This is the time that they have to figure out how to avoid a state of chronic distraction that would undermine their effectiveness. In our society with information overload, multitasking held up as a virtue, too much working and too little rest and relaxation, we are plagued with so much internal noise and disequilibrium that there is not enough internal silence for us to listen to our lives and know who we are, where we are and where we should be going. Faculty need to model a different reality for their students, but admittedly, it is very hard to do in this culture.

Parker Palmer, who writes on leadership and spirituality, has offered the following wisdom: "I must listen to my life and try to understand what it is truly about—or my life will never represent anything real in the world, no matter how earnest my intentions." This is the kind of wisdom that should be infused in a college education. Simply put, the value of a liberal arts education is priceless. This is the mission and niche of the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts. There is no need to wander around trying to find your mission; it has already found you. I urge you to gladly embrace it. There is no more awesome responsibility in a democracy. An academy that is truly committed to liberal arts education is our line of defense against the corporatization or commercialization of higher education.

Finally, let me talk about your President, your new leader. Mary and I served together as senior fellows at the McCormack Institute at UMass Boston. I got to know her as an intelligent, hardworking and compassionate colleague. We became soulmates. As she was finishing her doctoral work, we met on many occasions to talk about her career trajectory. I served as a sounding board and a guide. Our discussions did not focus on specific jobs so much as on what Mary cared about, the kind of work that had meaning for her, work that was people centered and work that was inspiring and that would make a difference. In fact, she was talking not about the kind of work that you go out and find but about the kind of work that finds you. Mary Grant was waiting to be called to important work consistent with her humanitarian values and personal mission to make a better world. Well, the call came, she gladly answered it, and the rest will be the stuff of history.

This is not an easy time to lead a college or university in the Commonwealth. There are lots of minefields out there through which to navigate. However, this is not a time to wallow in despair and feel sorry for ourselves. We are now summoned to protect the core values and mission of the academy. We are summoned to know what is our irreducible bottom line, and to fight like hell not to go below it. That said, it will take changes in institutional policies and practices to effectively cope with current fiscal realities, because everything outside of the graveyard changes. It will require taking strategic action to a level never before contemplated. Such a time offers the opportunity to create new paradigms that preserve what is treasured and yet

embraces new thinking and operational practices. Constant renewal is an imperative of institutional life. Academies that fail to accept this truth court demise or worse.

I am convinced that in Mary Kathleen Grant you have the leader who will bring you to the "promised land," not just because of her leadership intelligence but because she will build alliances with everyone in your academy, based on respect and trust. That is her irreducible bottom line. This is not a time for timidity. This is a time to go for broke, because your current and future students need the brand of liberal arts education that you provide. I wish you the very best as you proceed on your passionate journey.

Four Minds: Case Studies in the Joy of Learning

BY MAURA C. FLANNERY

In this article I want to introduce you to the work of four people who are very important to me, and then discuss what their work has to do with teaching, particularly teaching nonmajors' courses, where students often don't have much interest in the subject matter. The four are all, like myself, biologists, but they are from very different fields. George Evelyn Hutchinson was an ecologist, Agnes Arber a botanist, Homer Smith a physiologist and Hans Zinsser a microbiologist. All were prominent researchers; the three men were members of the National Academy of Sciences, and Arber was the third woman elected to Britain's Royal Society. But it is not their research as such in which I am interested, and it is not their discoveries that drew me to them. Rather, it is their writings somewhat outside their fields of expertise that make them important to me. All four felt the need to move beyond biology, to look at how their research interests linked to history, philosophy, art, literature and religion. The passion they brought to these explorations is what I find so appealing. They were indeed lifelong learners, and their work and their lives can tell us a great deal about how we can live as passionate learners and also help our students do the same.

By its nature, scientific knowledge is to a certain extent cumulative, with each generation of researchers building on the work of past generations. This means that the research of people like my four becomes less and less cited as the years pass. While their work was important to those who came after them, their research becomes overlain with the work of so many others that their contributions are obscured. This is not quite the case with their writings outside their research areas; their work in history, philosophy and other areas wears better. Yes, it, too, becomes dated, but less so, and it retains its value longer. Each of my four has written books that are considered classics. It is these books that I want to focus upon, though like my subjects, I feel the need to stray from the topic at hand from time to time in order to put it in context.

Hans Zinsser

For lack of a better approach, I will deal with my four chronologically, beginning with Hans Zinsser (1878–1940), who came from a wealthy German-American family. He went to Columbia University, where he originally was drawn to literature, but then found an interest in biology. He attended Columbia's medical school with the intention of doing research in bacteriology. After spending a couple of years in medical practice, he obtained a research position at Columbia, and subsequently taught there as well as at Stanford and Harvard, where he spent the latter part of his career. Zinsser studied infectious diseases such as syphilis and typhus, as well as the body's immune response to such infections. He is best known for his work on typhus because of the book he wrote on it: *Rats, Lice, and History* (1935). This classic is still in print and still worth reading, though it is an odd book.

Zinsser labels *Rats* a biography of typhus and in the first chapter goes into a criticism of psychobiography, which he says he plans to avoid in dealing with his subject. This kind of tongue-in-cheek irony and excursion from the main subject is found throughout the book and adds to its appeal. The second chapter tackles why someone like himself feels the need to wander from his research, and he describes the relationship between science and art, in which he includes the art of biography. He then goes into a diatribe on the sins of modern poetry, which he loosely ties to the art and science section, though it really doesn't fit. It is nonetheless engaging in its wit and acidity.

Zinsser knows his poetry, and he speaks as a poet. For many years, he published poetry in *The Atlantic Monthly*, where in 1942, after his death, a collection of his poems appeared. A glance at these rather traditional verses indicates why T. S. Eliot and Gertrude Stein were anathema to him.

By the third chapter of *Rats*, which deals with the relationship between science and religion, Greek science, the origin of life and important advances in biology, the reader is getting used to the fact that Zinsser's style is discursive to say the least. Indeed, the topic of typhus receives almost no attention until the last third of the book. By that time, Zinsser has reviewed the history of infectious disease from ancient times and made the case that there is no good evidence for the existence of typhus in Europe until the 15th century. Along the way he has provided a good overview of how important infectious diseases have been in determining the course of history and has had fun describing what ancient texts, many of which he has examined, can and cannot tell us about infectious diseases of the past. Though he admits that he has little new to offer to the history of the field, his presentation to the nonspecialist reveals a tremendous depth of knowledge lightly displayed. It's obvious that while Zinsser was producing new discoveries about syphilis and typhus, he was also ferreting out the knowledge of the past of these and other diseases.

But Zinsser's interests extended further even than this. He was an accomplished violinist and horseman, keeping a stable at the farm he and his wife had outside Boston. His other intellectual interests are apparent in *As I Remember Him: The Biography of R.S.* I found a copy of this book at a library sale; it was considered so undesirable that it was in the "free" bin. Never having heard of it, I picked it up simply because I recognized Zinsser's name. When I started reading it, I took the title at face value, but it soon became apparent that this is a thinly disguised autobiography. Like his biography of typhus, it is very discursive. He doesn't say much about his personal life, just mentioning his wife and children, skipping over his years in medical school and his work in France during World War I. While the book is light on information, it is heavy on opinion, covering Zinsser's thoughts on everything from religion to politics and the development of modern medical practice in the United States. Along the way there are countless stories on such topics as delivering babies, fighting typhus in Serbia

and talking to college presidents. What is most impressive about the book is the range of Zinsser's interests and the passion and intellectual depth with which he explored them. Nobel Prize winner John Enders was one of Zinsser's graduate students. After Zinsser's death, Enders wrote of having daily lunch with him: "Here, indeed, was a liberal education to be gained pleasantly while one dined" (3). Enders had begun graduate work in English literature but was deflected from this path because his roommate was a student of Zinsser's, and it was Zinsser who reawakened Enders' earlier interest in biology. It is the zest Enders obviously felt that Zinsser also transmits in his writings, and it is this zest that makes him one of my four.

Agnes Arber

The second is Agnes Arber (1879–1960), who I admit is my favorite, in part because her philosophical outlook on biology is closest to my own and also because I've delved most deeply into her life. Arber was a British plant anatomist who did rather traditional work on the structure of grasses and related plants. She spent several years studying at Cambridge and then received her doctorate from the University of London in 1906. Three years later she married a Cambridge plant paleontologist, Newell Arber, who died in 1918, when their only child, Muriel, was just five years old. Aside from fellowships, Arber never held an official position at Cambridge University, but she lived in Cambridge from the time of her marriage and worked at Balfour Laboratory—a Cambridge facility for women researchers and science students—until it was closed in 1926 (Packer). Then she set up a small laboratory in her home where she did research until the beginning of World War II. She produced more than 60 research articles and three major works on plant anatomy: *Water Plants*, *Monocotyledons* and *The Gramineae*.

Throughout her career, Arber was also interested in the history and philosophy of botany. Her first book, published in 1912, before any of those on plant morphology, dealt with the history of early printed herbals, and it remains a classic reference work in the field. Over the years, she also published numerous articles on history and philosophy. After the start of World War II, when it became difficult to buy supplies and when she had, at the age of 60, to learn to cook and housekeep, Arber gave up laboratory research and turned in-

stead to more work in history and philosophy. She published *The Natural Philosophy of Plant Form* in 1950. In this book she presented a history of the study of plant morphology from the viewpoint of idealist philosophy. She focused on Goethe's idea of the leaf as the basic unit of plant form, with all other forms being derivative of the leaf. She argued for an amended view, with the shoot as the fundamental form.

Natural Philosophy, published when Arber was over 70, was considered rather odd and away from the mainstream by most botanists, particularly because she gave evolution rather short shrift. She couldn't see how all the subtle differences among species had adaptive advantages and thus were the result of natural selection. The book appeared just as what is called the evolutionary synthesis was taking hold in biology—the idea that genetics and evolutionary biology together could provide convincing explanations for species change. Thus, Arber's work looked passé. However, this didn't deter her from her philosophical investigations, and four years later she published *The Mind and the Eye: "A Study of the Biologist's Viewpoint,"* a very readable introduction to the philosophy of biology.

The Mind and the Eye is my favorite Arber work, and the one I discovered first when I was working on my dissertation on the aesthetics of biology. Her thinking attracted me because she argued that doing science bears many resemblances to making art. They both involve creativity and an intuitive sense of rightness. And in the case of morphology, they both deal with the visual and its relationship to the intellectual. Arber was in a good position to appreciate the ties between art and science because of her background in art. Her father, Henry Robertson, was an artist by profession, a competent landscape painter. When Arber was just three years old, he began giving her art lessons. Watercolors of plants done when she was in her teens indicate that she had by that time become a skilled artist in her own right, and she did almost all the illustrations for her articles and books, some portions of which have more illustrations than text. When she writes of the connection between mind and eye, between thinking and seeing, and also of the connection between art and science, she writes as someone who has not only experienced these connections but has thought profoundly about them.

After *The Mind and the Eye*, Arber wrote one more book, *The Manifold and the One*, published in 1957, when she was 78 years old. This has been rightly classified as a book on mysticism (Hauke). Arber's mysticism wasn't based on any religious belief but grew out of her desire to dig deeply into the essence of plant form. In the preface, she writes that from early in life, she was fascinated by the question of the relationship between the one and the many, and this is obvious in her botanical work. She is always striving to see connections among species and among structures, to find the unity in the diversity of plant form. This interest led her further and further into philosophy, and ultimately into mysticism, as she tried to find answers to fundamental questions about the structure of life. *The Manifold and the One* is hardly a work of science, but reading it provides insights into how Arber did science and what underlying assumptions and interests guided her work. It is an indication of how fruitful exploration outside one's field can be.

Homer Smith

My third favorite, Homer Smith (1895–1962), was also driven by a nagging question that came to him early in life. Smith was a renal physiologist at New York University Medical School who did much of the fundamental work on measuring kidney function. This research laid the foundation for later studies that made kidney transplants and dialysis possible. Smith's work involved not just human kidney function but that of a variety of other species as well. He was particularly interested in lungfish, because of a peculiarity of their natural history. These freshwater fish have lungs, as their name implies, and frequently come to the surface to breathe, since their gills are rather rudimentary and don't absorb sufficient oxygen from water. Because of the need to surface frequently, lungfish live in shallow waters, waters that often dry up during droughts. The fish have adapted by being able to survive several years encased in dried mud. When the rains finally return, the fish come out of their torpor and swim away.

Smith was interested in discovering how lungfish avoided being poisoned by body wastes during such periods; obviously there was something different about how their kidneys operated. To learn more, Smith went to Africa on a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1928 and collected dozens of lungfish, packed them in steel drums filled with mud

and brought them back to New York. He made a similar trip to New Guinea two years later, and it was on the long ocean voyage back from there that he wrote *Kamongo*, which in a subsequent edition received the subtitle "The Lungfish and the Padre." This book has been described as a work of fiction and philosophy, and it is just that. It is a long dialogue on the meaning of life between a biologist named Joel, obviously Smith's alter ego, and an Episcopal missionary; it takes place on a ship traveling through the Red Sea and the Suez Canal to the Mediterranean.

I came upon *Kamongo* in a used bookstore. I knew of Smith because I had been in graduate school at NYU in the 1970s and Smith was still spoken of there with reverence. His *From Fish to Philosopher*, on the evolution of the kidney, was considered a must-read, so I did—and found it interesting but difficult. When I discovered that Smith had written something that was labeled on the cover as a work of "fiction and philosophy," I was surprised. I was even more surprised when I started to read it and found it riveting. The novel begins with Joel describing the atmosphere of oppressive heat on board the ship; it is one of the most sensuously satisfying descriptions I've ever read. Admittedly, the dialogue that follows is one-sided, with Joel arguing that evolution, and therefore life itself, is without a goal, and the padre arguing that this just can't be so. Joel counters by saying the only purpose to life is what we choose to give it. In essence, this is a book on existentialism, but from a biologist's perspective—with a wonderful story about hunting for lungfish, views on our relationship to apes and a beautiful description of life as a whirlpool of energy.

Kamongo was a best seller that was reprinted many times into the 1960s; it was even chosen for the Pocket Overseas Editions for the Armed Forces during World War II. Smith followed it three years later with another novel, *The End of Illusion*, which was not as well received, though it is well written and has a more developed plot and more characters than *Kamongo*. Smith was disappointed with the book's reception and turned away from fiction, but not from writing. He spent many years researching two books that came out within a year of each other. *Man and His Gods* is a substantial history of the relationship between science and religion from prehistoric times to the end of the 19th century. More accurately, it is what Smith sees as

the progressive replacement of religion by science: As science came to explain more and more natural phenomena, the need for supernatural explanations diminished.

At the end of *Man and His Gods*, Smith presents an autobiographical piece titled "The Story of This Book" in which he tells of his family background and his upbringing in a small mining town in Colorado. His rather idyllic childhood, which he describes in loving detail, continued until he was 17 years old. With his father's impending death on his mind, he read headlines about the sinking of the *Titanic*. This got him thinking, and he writes: "I wrestled, in my own terms, with the Meaning of Things. I took a sharp scalpel and took the wrapping off life and took a close look at its insides. . . . On that April 15, 1912, this book was begun." It can be argued that his other popular works were also started on that day, though I don't think Smith ever felt he had completely unpacked this issue. While he takes a very materialistic and mechanistic view of life and argues persuasively that science has supplanted religion, I get the feeling from his writings that deep down, he never fully convinced himself of these ideas. That's why he had to do more and more research and approach the problem from more and more angles—fiction and nonfiction, historical and scientific.

Even his last book, *From Fish to Philosopher*, deals in part with his mental struggle. Smith presents the development of the vertebrate kidney within the evolutionary history of vertebrates, particularly fish, since it was in fish that the basic structure and functioning of the kidney was laid down. It seems odd that in such a book the last chapter would be titled "Consciousness," but Smith's contention is that without the elaborate control mechanisms involved in kidney function, the internal environment of the body wouldn't be stable enough for the proper functioning of a nervous system as sophisticated as that in a human. Without the kidney, consciousness—and thus philosophy—would be impossible. In his discussion of consciousness, Smith has a long section on playing the piano, as an example of a skill that entails both conscious and unconscious nervous control. He obviously had fun with this, describing how many notes it's possible to play per second. Needless to say, he was an accomplished pianist, and his fervor for this art, like his fervor for finding the meaning of life, comes through in his writing.

George Evelyn Hutchinson

Evelyn Hutchinson (1903–1991) also had a tremendous fervor, but for him it was more diffuse; his interests were legion. For ten years during the 1940s and 1950s he wrote a regular column for *American Scientist*, and this allowed him to indulge some of his interests—from UFOs to anthropology, from religious rites to natural history. By profession, Hutchinson was an ecologist who had left Cambridge University for a job in South Africa without bothering to finish his doctorate. From there, he went to Yale, where he spent the remainder of his career. He was known for his work on freshwater ecosystems, for his mathematical approach and for developing the concept of niche—the place where an organism lives and what it does there. He was also known as a brilliant and kindly teacher who trained some of the great minds in 20th-century ecology.

From the time I took ecology in college, I had heard of Evelyn Hutchinson, but I didn't really come to love him until I read his book *The Itinerant Ivory Tower*, and particularly an essay titled "The Gothic Attitude to Natural History." He begins by describing carvings of leaves done in the 13th century in the chapter house of a monastery in Southwell, England. These leaves are so realistic that not only are oak leaves differentiated from those of the maple but the artist even clearly distinguished between the two species of native British oak. Hutchinson sees in such art the beginnings of modern empirical science and argues, therefore, that the later Middle Ages were much more fruitful scientifically than had been previously assumed. After discussing the leaves and their significance, Hutchinson makes an abrupt switch in topics, something he often does in his essays. He gives a great deal of credit to his readers and assumes that they can make the needed linkage—provided it would deprive them of the satisfaction of creating it for themselves. In the second part of this piece, Hutchinson discusses a contemporary study on three species of deer mice and how they live on chaparral terrain east of San Francisco. He sees this work as in the tradition of empiricism begun in medieval times; ecologists are following in the footsteps of the artists of Southwell.

Another essay in the same collection also attracted me to Hutchinson. It was his obituary for the great biologist D'Arcy Thompson. In a footnote, Hutchinson writes that he met Thompson only once,

when Thompson visited Yale and they both attended a staff meeting at the Osborn Zoological Laboratory. Since it was the birthday of one of the professors, someone had sent out for ice cream and “no one present is likely to forget the Olympian gusto with which the author of *On Growth and Form* disposed of his portion” (*Itinerant* 170). I like this story because it shows not only Hutchinson’s sense of humor but also that he saw the importance of information that can only be characterized as trivial. Mentioning D’Arcy Thompson’s eating ice cream was Hutchinson’s way of saying that even larger-than-life figures in science are human beings with all their complexities, inconsistencies and foibles.

One reason Hutchinson’s writings are so engaging is that he’s a master of such details. He has a sense of what would be of interest to the reader in large part because he knows himself well enough to realize what interests him. He seemed to have an insatiable love of information and ideas. In his memoirs, he writes of spending a year doing research at the Marine Research Station in Naples and of his wanderings in the area. He is fascinated by religious ritual, including rites related to Saint Januarius. These center on yearly commemorations involving the periodic liquefaction of the saint’s blood, a relic kept in a gold-encrusted glass vial.

When I originally read Hutchinson’s memoir more than ten years ago, this is the portion of the book that I most remembered. It seemed odd to me that he not only had written in such detail of the procession and other activities surrounding the veneration of this relic but had also done considerable research on the ritual’s history. Now, having read many of Hutchinson’s essays, I can see that this is very much how he approached everything in which he was interested: He plunged in and learned as much as he could. His fascination with the blood of Saint Januarius is hardly an anomaly; it is just one of dozens of examples of how far his mind ranged. He also dug, in the sense of looking beneath the surface of ideas. In the introduction to his first collection of essays (*Itinerant*), Hutchinson writes that some of the pieces are difficult (and they are) but that one of the joys of intellectual pursuits is to work through such difficulty, and he is right. Reading a Hutchinson essay may be a challenge, but his messages are worth the work—they range from the philosophy of science to the nature of human nature. Even his textbook on population ecology is full of

intellectual challenges and surprises. It is like no other text I know. Some pages are literally full of footnotes, where he takes historical digressions that he obviously relished writing. I'm not sure this was a best seller as a textbook, but it makes a wonderful introduction to the intellectual foundations of the field—as well as to the mind of one of its greatest students.

The Message of the Four

I have written about my four friends for two main reasons. First because I find them fascinating people and I want to share my fascination with others. This is a habit with me, one that I acquired early in life. I had parents who loved learning simply for its own sake. My mother had a high school education, my father probably didn't finish more than the fifth or sixth grade, but they both read a lot—my mother focusing on literature, including Shakespeare and gossip columns, my father on politics and the wonders of technology. But they didn't just read, they shared. To them, as to my four, learning was tied to telling others about what they learned. The four did it in writing, my parents did it in the kitchen and living room. My sister and I always knew the latest on who was divorcing whom and were regularly updated on the sins of the mayor of New York. Neither of us became wedding planners or government majors, but we both became teachers. It was inevitable; our role models were two people who loved to learn and loved even more to tell others what they had learned. A passion for learning, though perhaps not overtly practical, has served me well. I chose a profession where I can indulge it—and a husband as well; one of the things that first attracted me to him was his love of books. By the standards of former Enron or WorldCom executives, we haven't been successful financially, but then again, we haven't been indicted, either.

Besides wanting to share my knowledge and enthusiasm for these people, I also have shared their lives with you because I think they can tell us a great deal about how to teach more effectively. It is almost a cliché to say that the best teachers are those who have a passion for their subject. Such a statement is often made without comment, implying that you either have passion or you don't, that it is not something to work on, to cultivate. To a certain extent, I can see this point. Passion is not something we learn in a book as we can the

concepts of a discipline, but I do think that passion can be nurtured, and this is what my four were doing when they moved outside their narrow research areas. Yes, they explored out of the passion to know, but I think such explorations also fostered that passion. They saw such work as fun and the more they did it, the more they wanted to continue to do it, and this must have translated into renewed passion for their research as well. The virologist Lawrence Kilham provides another view of such cross-pollination. He is an avid bird-watcher, so avid, in fact, that he has published numerous articles and books in ornithology, but this hasn't kept him from being an award-winning researcher who developed the measles vaccine. He found that the two interests complemented each other nicely. When one of his pursuits was in the doldrums, the other sustained him; the mental refreshment that watching birds provided helped keep his mind open to new ideas about viruses.

My four biologists obviously shared Kilham's view that there is nourishment in wandering from the minutiae of research, though their wanderings were in many ways related to their work. It was just that they were not afraid to cross disciplinary lines; they had the self-assurance that they could master ideas in philosophy and history, ideas that gave them a richer view of their own areas of expertise. They were so passionate about their subjects that they had to follow them outside disciplinary borders, to ask how ideas had developed, how events of the past had shaped the views of the day; to find out what philosophical assumptions lay behind how their fields operated. Nor were Smith and Zinsser afraid to go even further and express their passion in creative writing.

Because they were willing to go far afield, the four developed novel viewpoints and they dared express them. While Arber's views on plant form were not popular at the time she presented them, this didn't stop her from elaborating them and writing cogently about them. Today, with the new molecular perspective on plant morphology, many of her ideas are coming into vogue. Zinsser's delving into the history of infectious disease seems particularly prescient in light of our newfound interest in infection as we continue to be assaulted with apparently new infectious agents, just as peoples of the past had to deal with such "new" diseases as syphilis and typhus.

While Arber was the only one of the four who did not hold a teaching position, they all taught through their writings, and in their writings they all linked science to the humanities. They were interdisciplinary scholars, and more. They all had an aesthetic sense of what was fascinating, and hunted down interesting ideas and then shared them with their readers. They ignored the fact that the aesthetic is often not viewed as important; they weren't afraid of it nor afraid to write of it. Arber and Zinsser both wrote explicitly of the relationship between art and science, arguing that these pursuits are more similar than they appear because they are both deeply creative and intellectually challenging. All four were also acting as science critics, in the way that Lewis Thomas saw that role, as stepping back from the specifics of research and taking a broader view of where science fits into human experience. They all valued learning that was accessible and were passionate about clearly communicating their ideas to others. One reason I was drawn to all four is that their writings were so understandable. They sometimes deal with difficult concepts or complex processes, but the reader is never left in any doubt as to what they are writing about.

Infusing Joy into Our Teaching

We need to keep such role models in mind in our own lives and not get so bogged down in teaching and our professional work that we forget the joys of knowing that drew us to this profession to begin with. But just as importantly, we need to think about how we can introduce our students to the passionate pursuit of knowledge. Admittedly, this is not easy, and no one knows this better than I do. I teach biology to non-science majors, many of whom delight in telling me how much they disliked science courses in high school, the implication being that they are unlikely to change their minds in college. In addition, I teach in my university's college dedicated to career-oriented programs, so my students are focused on their careers and not necessarily on making the most of liberal arts core courses. I have been doing this for more than 30 years, which makes it easier to understand why my four are so important to me: I feed on their passion to sustain my own. And I have found that at least sometimes I can communicate this passion to my students.

The four didn't talk or write explicitly about love of learning; they simply lived their values, which may be why their example is so powerful. What makes my four such good writers is that, without getting very personal, they put a tremendous amount of themselves and their joy into their writing. Even if the periodic liquefaction of the blood of Saint Januarius in a reliquary in Naples is not our focus of interest, Hutchinson makes us want to read on. And Arber makes her passion for unity in multiplicity our passion as she piles up instances of thinkers of the past grappling with this paradox. Just telling students that there is pleasure in learning is not enough; we have to create situations where they experience such pleasure. This does not mean making things easy; it does mean making things engaging and allowing our own enthusiasm to come forth.

For me, getting students to write essays on how biology affects their lives—getting them to focus on a single tree in their neighborhood or an experience with an invertebrate—is one way to help them appreciate the affective side of learning. I also show them striking images of organisms, cells or molecules; this is particularly easy to do now with the Internet available in the classroom. And I do what my parents did: share interesting items that I come across in my reading—a new centipede species discovered in Central Park, of all places, or a snake that defecates less than once a year. I do not make the mistake that many parents today make in forcing children—or students—to be constantly on the alert for the wonders around them. One of the reasons my parents were so successful in imparting their values is that they didn't overdo, they didn't appear to work at it; they did it for their own pleasure. On the other hand, the joy of learning is something students should be made more aware of. When we've finished a particularly challenging concept in class, but one that students have mastered, it's a good time to step back and discuss what has happened and how they feel about accomplishing something intellectually. I see this as part of making students more aware of their own thinking. While they may never take another science course, the feeling of accomplishment they have experienced in studying evolution may make them more aware of how wonderful it is to learn in other disciplines. The joy of learning definitely can cross over from one field to others.

Another way to nourish a zest for learning is by encouraging students to teach one another. Joy in learning is doubled if that joy and knowledge are shared with others—and there is a third joy, that of reshaping what is learned in order to share it. This means deep enough learning to be able to do this reshaping. Exercises in peer teaching open students' eyes to how difficult and how rewarding it can be to master a subject well enough to teach it. Such pleasure in learning is what we have to reintroduce as a focus in higher education if we are to be serious about lifelong learning. This concept is often discussed in relation to helping people learn new skills so they will continue to be successful in the marketplace, but the much more essential reason for encouraging lifelong learning is simply the sheer pleasure in learning something new, at any age.

I don't think it's coincidental that for the past 30 years higher education has been stressing the practical benefits of a college education in terms of standard of living and that there is now a crisis of values in business. We have made money our greatest value and have forgotten what got most of us into higher education to begin with—the joy of learning. In addition, we have become so caught up with the business model of education, so focused on assessment and productivity, that we have ignored the aesthetic or affective side of our work, the part that is hardest to assess and to put a dollar value on.

If as we face hard economic times we continue to see success in life merely in monetary terms, the depression will be more than just economic. Our emphasis on money as the measure of success has fueled the greed causing this economic crisis. If academe fails to value learning for its own sake, why should society as a whole do so? It is time to take up again the values that drove my parents and my four scholars. Great work comes out of great passion, and we are depriving our culture of a great deal if we don't nurture such passion.

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Big Rock Candy Mountain

BY KATHERINE HOLLANDER

Listening to this recording I imagine you
standing on the clanking metal between the cars
singing this song to yourself as you piss
out of the train and into the greenish-black night.
Oh, the buzzing of the bees and the cigarette trees,
you croon, lingering over the little streams of alcohol
that wet this land where the boxcars all are empty
and the farmers' barns are full of hay, where the bulldogs
all have rubber teeth and the policemen have wooden legs. . . .

I think of you washing out your fragile underwear, your
disintegrating socks, in a creek, your eyes a little red,
the battered, hollow-cheeked flask swinging
in the pocket next to your heart, your cuticles smudged,
your back shimmering with grime, the short, sharp gold hairs
thrusting up through the skin of your face; singing mindlessly
to yourself, knotting snares together from string and the stiff
straws of the field, hoping for a ground-bird or a squirrel for supper,
your tongue on the loosening tooth at the back of your mouth.
And then, under a gray sky like a withered balloon, just beginning
to spit rain, you lope after the train and swing yourself aboard,

slumping into the grainy darkness,
settling yourself among the bags of rice,
or the toothy machine parts,
or the bloody sides of meat,
singing, settling back to chew your cheek
and think of me, my hands
on the soft, floured flesh of biscuit dough,
my belly fetching up against the warm
marble countertop in the kitchen of the rich.

For John Coakley

Grief

BY MIRIAM O'NEAL

is like sea monkeys
you buy from ads in *Marvels*—
comes dry, needs water.
Sometimes

getting the paper
I feel it on my skin

like the chafe of wind rising,
or see it whole

between two blinks—
an oak leaf struck midspin

by a mote.
Sometimes it settles

like the crows
in the tamarack in winter

calling its own name,
then silent—

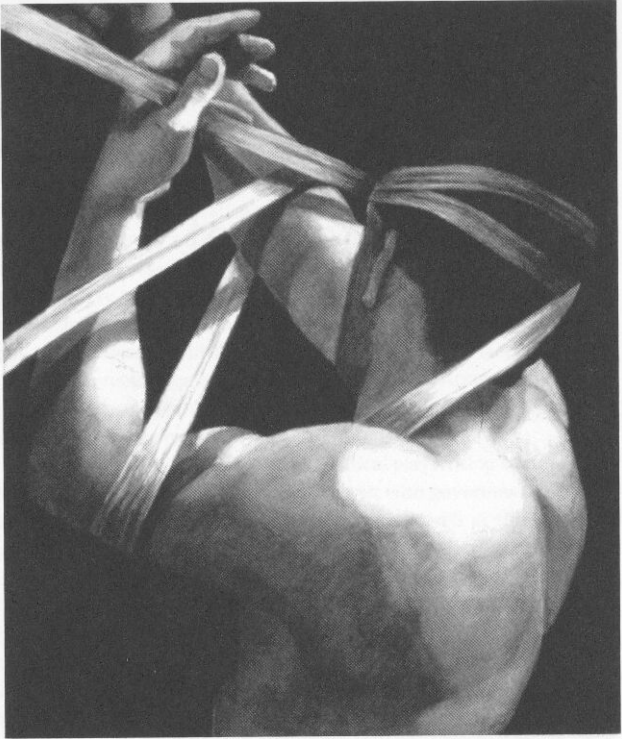
entranced
by its own squall.

Reflections of Gender: An Exhibition of Drawings by Joan Ryan

Excerpts from a review by Tony Gengareilly, professor of fine and performing arts, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts

The recent exhibition at the newly renovated Porter Street Gallery on the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts campus featured the drawings of Boston artist Joan Ryan. Ms. Ryan, an associate professor of drawing, is chair of the Fine Arts and Foundations departments at the Art Institute of Boston. She has a long, distinguished list of gallery venues, and her work, done principally in pastel, focuses on the human figure.

The MCLA exhibition included a number of life-size nudes done in sharp contrasting light with a monochromatic range of values that broadcasts powerful forms. The strongly crafted full-length figures, as well as the torsos and body parts (hands, feet, arms), have a metallic texture that suggests suits of armor scattered around the walls. In this "medieval" context the sculptural shapes assume an almost Romanesque quality as they play with traditional religious and artistic symbols. . . . In two . . . frames a male figure is apparently imprisoned in what appear to be straps of fabric that extend outside the picture [one of these, *Holding Pattern*, is reproduced here]. We want to recall Michelangelo's struggling slaves trying to escape earthly bonds and free the soul from matter. Here, though, we have no glimpse of the captive's facial expression but sense, nonetheless, that the male form is not writhing in pain but, rather, embraces the cloth binding that represents his earthbound state in a kind of private dance.



Joan Ryan, *Holding Pattern*, pastel 40" x 42"

The Theater of Hyperrealism: The Political Plays of Harold Pinter

BY DENNIS RUSSELL

Although the works of playwright Harold Pinter—one of the most influential and controversial dramatists in the history of modern theater—have always resonated with political undercurrents, five of his plays from 1984 to 1996 have been overt, uncompromising, no-holds-barred explorations of fascistic political systems. Those plays—*One for the Road* (1986), *Mountain Language* (1988), *Party Time* and *The New World Order* (1993) and *Ashes to Ashes* (1996)—trace the transformation of Pinter into the artist as activist. In earlier plays, such as *The Birthday Party* and *The Hothouse*, the political implications were more metaphorical and enigmatic in nature. But Pinter acknowledges that by the early 1980s, he found himself reacting to the brutality of contemporary existence in ways that were altering his writing style. Whereas his earlier plays were “full of games and jokes,” his plays emerging from the eighties and nineties are “shorter and shorter pieces which are more and more brutal and more and more overtly naked.” As Pinter has observed, “I’m afraid that for me the joke is over” (Gussow 82).

Each of Pinter's overt political plays is concerned with the systematic oppression of the individual. At the core of Pinter's preoccupation with this theme is his distrust of governmental systems, even democratic ones in the United States and his native Britain. He believes that millions of people are living lives of intimidation, particularly those who have little money and who are dispossessed and disenfranchised "by various governmental techniques and tactics" (Gussow 84). For Pinter, lying is the central component of most governments, and the lies are unwittingly repeated by a lot of the media. In England, Pinter says by way of example, the predominant governmental lie is as follows: "You're told that you're a happy man, it's a wonderful society, everything is fine. We're told that other people suffer various ills, various oppressions, of which we are free. . . . The actual facts simply do not correspond to language used about those facts." According to Pinter, a "debased language" permeates English society in which the lie is automatic, persuasive and pervasive (85).

Pinter's explorations with overt political playwrighting stemmed, in large part, from his long-standing concerns with governments' use of torture as a weapon of political oppression, as well as the threat of nuclear catastrophe (Pinter, *Road* 12). In particular, the plight of political prisoners facing official acts of torture has captured his attention. In 1984, Pinter traveled to Turkey after learning that members of the Turkish Peace Association were imprisoned for eight years' hard labor for belonging to that movement. Upon investigation of the situation, he learned that there are thousands of political prisoners being held in Turkish prisons, each day confronting hellish living conditions and systematic acts of torture (13). After his visit to Turkey, Pinter met two young Turkish women at a party and asked them what they thought of the sentences for the members of the Turkish Peace Association, to which they responded, "Oh, well it was probably deserved. Well, they were probably communists. We have to protect ourselves against communism." Stunned by the complacent reaction, Pinter asked the women if they knew what the conditions were like in Turkish military prisons. They shrugged and said, "Well, communists are communists you know." When he inquired about their opinion of torture, they replied, "Oh, you're a man of such imagination" (13-14).

Recounting this story in a May 1985 interview, Pinter said he left the party in such a rage that he went home and vented his anger and frustration by writing the play *One for the Road* in a single night. As he observed:

I feel very strongly that people should know what's going on in this world, on all levels. But at the time, when I came back from that drinks party, and sat down in the chair and took out a piece of paper, I had an image in my mind of a man with a victim, an interrogator with a victim. And I was simply investigating what might take place. Given a certain state of affairs, what would the attitude of the interrogator to his victim be? So I was simply writing the play. I wasn't thinking then of my audience. Having started on the play, letting the images and the action develop, I did go the whole way to the hilt, as far as I could. The end result being that the play is pretty remorseless. (Pinter, *Road*14-15)

One for the Road, first performed in England on March 13, 1984, and directed by Pinter, is a study of the abuse of power and authority over the powerless. It is a violent, disturbing portrait of political horror in which an interrogator known only as Nicolas (played by Alan Bates in the original production) torments a tortured prisoner and his imprisoned wife and child. The setting is a stark, antiseptic interrogation room with one window, one interrogation chair and the interrogator's desk. Interrogating first a battered-looking 30-year-old man called Victor, then his seven-year-old son, Nicky, and his 30-year-old wife, Gila, the interrogator Nicolas engages in the language of oppression to belittle their personal moral and political beliefs, and to ultimately break their spirits.

Pinter's concern with the language of oppression reflects the argument of Haig Bosmajian, who states that the rhetoric of hate has historically been used to subjugate those in society who lack power or position. Bosmajian points out that the Nazis defined Jews as "bacilli," "parasites," "disease," "demon" and "plague" (6). Similarly, the language of white racism has been used to keep people of color in their place, while sexist language has allowed men to define who and what a woman is and must be. And labels such as "traitors," "saboteurs"

and "obscene degenerates" were applied to students protesting the war in Vietnam (7). Playing the role of a power-wielder utilizing the language of oppression to muzzle oppositional voices during the Vietnam War, Bosmajian writes, "Are such people to be listened to? Consulted? Argued with? Obviously not! One doesn't listen to, much less talk to, traitors and outlaws, sensualists and queers. One only punishes them or, as Spiro Agnew suggested in one of his 1970 speeches, there are some dissenters who should be separated 'from our society with no more regret than we would feel over discarding rotten apples'" (7).

Throughout *One for the Road*, the interrogator flaunts his unbridled power over his prisoners, repeatedly underscoring how in just the snap of a finger he could seal their fates by keeping them imprisoned or ordering their executions. In fact, by the end of the play, the interrogator takes uninhibited delight in telling Victor that he and his wife are free to go, but that their son has been executed. Although Victor and Gila are freed, the killing of their son permanently imprisons the couple in a life of torment and despair. Herein lies the shocking truth of *One for the Road*, that those who hold the reins of power, and for ideological reasons choose to abuse that power, not only systematically violate the powerless in bodily ways but also violate them psychologically and spiritually. Pinter's play is observing, in brutally graphic terms, the methods used by fascistic forces to create a numbing, almost surreal world of hopelessness—all in the name of controlling political opponents and silencing oppositional voices.

Pinter never reveals in *One for the Road* the offense that Victor and his family have committed in the eyes of the state, nor does the audience ever learn the country in which the play is set. For Pinter, both are beside the point because in the former, it is implied that it is the political ideology of Victor and Gila that is being punished; and in the latter, Pinter believes that all countries (even democracies) are capable of engaging in acts of violence toward their citizens. As Pinter says in a description of *One for the Road* on the back cover of the Grove Press edition of the play:

One for the Road deals with things that happen in about 90 countries throughout the world. We have evidence that 90 governments actually subscribe to torture by police or mili-

tary, whether they say they do or not. *One for the Road* is an expression of a series of events where we are looking at people who have been tortured or will be tortured. It's brutally real: my earlier plays were perhaps metaphors for states of affairs in various respects. This is not a metaphor about anything—it's just a brutal series of facts.

The playwright's position is buttressed by psychologist Ervin Staub's examination of group-induced violence and genocide. Staub maintains that rarely is the state's use of official violence directed only at people who cause suffering. Instead, its intensity and the circle of its victims tend to increase over time. This becomes evident in the history of torture. For example, in the Middle Ages, when torture was part of the legal system, the circle of victims expanded over time. Starting with low-status members of society accused of a crime, progressively higher-status defendants and then witnesses were tortured in order to extract evidence from them (Staub 26). In examining group-related acts of violence, such as political torture, as phenomena representing human evil, Staub concludes, "Ordinary psychological processes and normal, common human motivations and certain basic but not inevitable tendencies in human thought and feeling (such as devaluation of others) are the primary sources of evil. Frequently, the perpetrators' own insecurity and suffering cause them to turn against others and begin a process of increasing destructiveness" (26).

In 1988, Pinter continued his exploration of state-enforced oppression in the play *Mountain Language*. Also set in an unnamed country, it consists of four brief prison scenes. In the first, a group of women visitors wait outside all day to see their imprisoned men, savaged by guard dogs and humiliated by the military. The play then moves inside the prison for more intimate glimpses of the inhuman regime: the prohibition of the prisoners' native language; a young wife briefly encountering the sight of her battered husband; a seemingly endless flow of insults directed toward the prisoners and their women; and the disturbing scene of an old woman who, finally permitted to speak the language outlawed by the state, has nothing left to say.

First performed in London on October 20, 1988, and directed by Pinter, *Mountain Language* has further refined the use of language that

refuses to hide behind the curtain of metaphor, and instead uses language that is raw, coarse, unflinching and as oppressive as a blow to the face. As was the case with *One for the Road*, Pinter in *Mountain Language* is illustrating how words can be used as weapons of oppression to control the powerless in society. Yet, in *Mountain Language*, he expands his exploration of tyranny by underscoring how the suppression of language and the loss of freedom of expression diminish the human spirit (Gussow 68).

Pinter is also clearly using such merciless rhetorical devices in both plays as a method of shocking the audience into the cold-steel recognition of the plight of political prisoners. At the same time, he is uncomfortable with interpreting his overt political plays as acts of propaganda, noting:

It could be said that *One for the Road* and *Mountain Language* are more direct statements than other plays. At the same time, they're both . . . a series of short, sharp, brutal images, which, I hope, amount to a play and not a public statement. Writing such things might be seen as a political act. (Gussow 70)

Pinter's next foray into overt political playwriting emerged in the form of *The New World Order*, which was first performed on July 19, 1991, in London, with Pinter directing. This short one-act, three-character play profiles two interrogators in an unknown regime who call upon the language of oppression to break the spirit of a political prisoner. The interrogators, Des and Lionel, ceaselessly condemn the unnamed, blindfolded prisoner for his questioning of "received ideas"—that is, ideas that have been approved by the state. The audience never learns which received ideas the prisoner has questioned; all that is known is that the prisoner (who never utters a word during the interrogation) once taught theology but now is considered to be a threat to the state's more repressive vision of "democracy."

The New World Order, like *One for the Road* and *Mountain Language*, is designed to shock the audience into considering the ugly truth that numerous countries throughout the world regularly violate the civil rights of their citizens and punish people for ideas that are not supported by the state or the majority. *The New World Order* is not only condemning less-civilized, Third World nations for their human rights

violations but also castigating democracies such as England and the United States for the curtailment and punishment of controversial, unorthodox and nonmainstream expression.

Pinter's political plays are indictments of governments' using the force of law or police-state tactics to intimidate the citizenry into silence. For Pinter, the silencing of ideas is antithetical to any true notion of a democracy or a civilized society. The enunciation of this theme brings to mind Jean-Francois Lyotard's discussion of human rights, noting, "Any banishment is a harm inflicted on those who undergo it, but this harm necessarily changes to a wrong when the victim is excluded from the speech community. For the wrong is the harm to which the victim cannot testify, since he cannot be heard. And this is precisely the case of those to whom the right to speak to others is refused" (Shute and Hurley 144).

Pinter quickly followed *The New World Order* with a 19-scene, nine-character play titled *Party Time*, which was first performed in London on October 31, 1991, under Pinter's direction. The play is set during an elegant cocktail party attended by the stylish rich, where country clubs and summer homes are the talk of the evening. However, outside the expensive apartment are the ominous sounds of helicopters and sirens, and eventually the talk turns to a sinister military presence that is protecting the partygoers from the political turmoil in the streets. The nature of the civil strife is the revolt of the have-nots of society, attempting to rise up against a privileged class that is indifferent to their poverty and suffering.

The partygoers long for "peace" in their society, but a peace that requires military-imposed sanctions placed upon the uprisers. As one character in *Party Time* chillingly observes while clenching his fist, "We want peace and we're going to get it. But we want that peace to be cast iron. No leaks. No draughts. Cast iron. Tight as a drum. That's the kind of peace we want and that's the kind of peace we're going to get. A cast-iron peace" (17).

Pinter states that *Party Time* is an examination of actual power, as opposed to the ambiguities of power. His purpose was to profile a hierarchy of power that would go to any length to preserve that position of power, "without any remorse or question whatsoever" (Gussow

152). Pinter adds, "*Party Time* is not a documentary account of parties I've actually been to or people I've actually met. It's the image that remains of the distinction between what happens upstairs at the party and what's going on down there in the street, and that's what interested me" (152–153).

Meanwhile, Pinter's most recent political play, *Ashes to Ashes*, encompasses themes similar to those of the four previous plays but is written in a more enigmatic, rather than confrontational, style. First staged in London on September 12, 1996, again under Pinter's direction, *Ashes to Ashes* is a two-character, one-act play set in the living room of a house in a suburban university town. Devlin (originally played by Stephen Rea) feels threatened by his wife Rebecca's recollections of an abusive former lover. Devlin relentlessly questions her for the full details of this previously undisclosed aspect of her life. But the more questions Devlin asks, the more confused he becomes as Rebecca's stories of her past intermingle with unnamed political atrocities of the world. By the play's end, the audience, like Devlin, is perplexed by the intersection of personal violence and the official violence of the state, but Pinter is relating an eerie communion between the abused Rebecca and the dead victims of political barbarities. For Pinter, the wellspring of violence is the abuse of unbridled power, be it in the private setting of a domestic relationship or the more public arena in which state policy is enacted. Viewing this from Staub's psychological perspective, it is the feelings of insecurity, incomprehension and lack of control—due to cultural background, personality and life problems—that lead people to seek strength and control through the exercise of power over others (Staub 41).

Ultimately, the five overt political plays of Pinter represent a turning point in the career of an influential playwright, with the writer seeking a language that is as stark, painful and terrifying as his subject matter: political torture, political persecution and the indifference of the privileged power-holders of society. For Pinter, there are certain realities of contemporary existence that artistically compel him to craft language that is as crude and savage as the perpetrators of state-sanctioned violence. From the period of 1984 to 1996, the politicization of Pinter is played out in his art, creating a theater of hyperrealism in

which metaphor and imagery are jettisoned in favor of dialogue designed to assault the senses and sensibilities of the audience. Whereas E. L. Doctorow chose to use heightened language in his 1978 play *Drinks Before Dinner* (a work about moral revulsion over the hypocrisies and injustices of modern existence, set at a cocktail party much like *Party Time*), Pinter's political plays call upon a devalued rhetoric that serves as a mirror for the way in which numerous governments devalue the worth of human life.

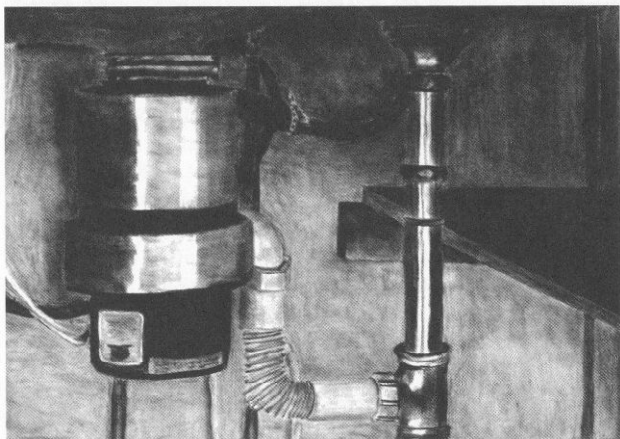
There is a moral urgency evident in Pinter's political plays, reflected in his assertion that he has no games left to play and no jokes left to tell. This moral component recalls John Gardner's observation that true art is essentially moral—that is, life-giving—and that “art builds; it never stands pat; it destroys only evil” (15). Pinter's political plays take a cold, hard, uncompromising look into the eyes of evil, and the playwright is asking the audience to hold the stare and not blink.

According to Staub, the essence of evil is the destruction of human beings, which includes not only killing but also creating conditions that “materially or psychologically destroy or diminish people's dignity, happiness, and capacity to fulfill basic material needs” (25). Clearly, Pinter is confronting his audience with the multiple levels of state-imposed evil and, in so doing, is imploring them to shake loose the bonds of complacency and moral ambivalence. As political scientist Murray Edelman has noted, some art helps shape what become established political beliefs, while other artistic creations serve as a corrective in their challenge to common beliefs and conventional worldviews (11–14, 17–21). Pinter's political plays are representative of the latter in their confrontational examinations of abusive political orthodoxies. Granted, these works offer no clear-cut solutions but, instead, serve as warnings or wake-up calls before it's too late.

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Two Drawings by William Spezeski



Under the Sink, charcoal



Teacups, charcoal

Blankety-Blank: Or, Bad Language

BY ROBERT H. ABEL

When I was a kid, I got my mouth washed out with soap if I uttered a curse word in the hearing of my parents. Presumably, this action was to make me pure again, perhaps purge demons I had invited into my soul, but in reality it only made me want to curse all the more, both for the vile taste of the soap and for the cruel and unusual punishment I suffered for what was demonstrably a minor, and common, offense. So sensitive were my parents to what they regarded as "bad language" that my brothers and I were even forbidden the use of such words as "gosh," "darn" and even "dang." Those were simply bad words in disguise and one could predict from their use an easy transition to the sterner stuff. Soaping, however, was reserved for the really hard-core offenses. If our mother was ever moved to contemplate the use of bad language—and I'm sure we often gave her just cause—she would use the phrase "blankety-blank." One example: "Get that blankety-blank bicycle out of the driveway before your dad comes driving in here and runs it over." I confess that this supervision of our language only made us more desperate to learn and experiment with the power and obvious magic of these dark utterances.

My mother's father was, in fact, an expert on the use of bad language and an inspiration to my brothers and me in that, and other, respects. Gramps seasoned his talk with forbidden words. Although sober when we knew him, he had enjoyed and suffered a considerable career in bars, as a trolley car driver, a policeman and a prizefighter. These are, of course, all professions in which one has the opportunity to exercise a broad range of linguistic resources. By the time we came along, Gramps had been comparatively domesticated, except for much of his lingo. Now he was confined to farming. We would watch in awe as he went about the everyday business of capturing chickens, slitting their throats, suspending the fatally wounded things over an old bathtub, then dousing the corpses in a bubbling pot of water, stripping off the feathers, burning away the pinfeathers with an awesome blowtorch (its steady, demonic roar the background music to this whole devilish opera), disemboweling them, giving us a lesson in chicken anatomy (stones in gizzards! Did we have gizzards?), then stuffing the pink/yellow corpses side by side in a big enamel pan that went into a refrigerator right there in the barn, a refrigerator whose sole purpose was to serve as a chicken morgue.

Gramps also, of course, butchered pigs (a much more traumatic experience for us) and sheared sheep and shoved the cow around when it proved blasé to his commands. None of this required a language of refinement. When a flock of ducks rattled out of the bushes and impeded Gramps's progress up the driveway, pushing a wheelbarrow, say, he did not politely admonish them to make way so he could more efficiently conduct his labors. Indeed, this was just the kind of occasion that would call forth the kind of invective we boys found so liberating. It was curt, businesslike and inventive, and blew the ducks and geese out of his way as effectively as a squall. Who, upon seeing the effects of this linguistic black magic, would not want to appropriate it for his or her own uses? Of all the weapons and tools of which we were aware and appreciated the use—from shotguns to scythes to tractors—none was so readily available for deployment, so free of danger to the user (cf. the awesome rototiller) nor so effective in advancing the projects of the will. To swear, it seemed to us, was to part the waters.

Nothing, not even politics, called forth my grandfather's keen capacity for vituperation more powerfully than engines. Mowing the

lawn that sloped down from the farmhouse to the street was at the bottom of my grandfather's list of "chores," and he would happily have neglected it altogether except that he got nagged into it by Grandma, who could use a choice phrase of her own now and then, as in: "Ain't you ever goin' to mow the damn lawn?" The magic of the bad word even worked on my grandfather! But because he was not much interested in the lawn, the lawnmower, too, like any self-respecting machine, became surly with neglect. Unfortunately for Gramps, the lawn grass was not of the variety that could be whacked into submission with his hay cutters or he would have made a couple of quick passes with the tractor and be done with it. Alas, lawn grass was of a more delicate nature than orchard grass or hay and couldn't be bullied or wrestled into compliance with the demands of my grandmother's aesthetics. This required my grandfather first and foremost to get the lawnmower running right, and this in turn apparently required him to bring forth from the depths of his soul the most atomic-powered of his oaths.

One of the treats our grandmother lavished on us boys when we visited was "soda pop." The only time we had carbonated beverages to drink at home was when one or another of us got the flu or was recovering from an appendectomy or tonsillectomy. Even then, the choice was limited to ginger ale and ginger ale only. At our grandparents' home we were introduced to such splendid vintages as root beer, orange soda, even cola. We quickly became connoisseurs, and I, for one, decided I would never again touch cream soda in this life, unless handsomely bribed. My youngest brother, for his part, rather fancied cherry soda, which he was welcome to, as far as the rest of us were concerned.

Now, it is true that I have many, many fond memories of my Ohio boyhood (and awful ones, of course, since Ohio is no different from the rest of the world in that respect), but among the most warming of them would surely be this:

My brothers and I sitting in the sunshine on the porch steps, swilling a soda pop, belching, our noses tingling, and Gramps a scant ten feet away trying to coerce a lawnmower into proper behavior with a truly mind-boggling thunderstorm of those beautiful bad words.

Contributors

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